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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Seventy-first year

Identical letters dated 23 August 2016 from the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

The situation in the Occupied State of Palestine continues to deteriorate daily and the Palestinian civilian population continues to suffer immensely as Israel intensifies its unlawful punitive measures and actions, including in connection with its attacks against the besieged Gaza Strip and its ongoing settlement activities throughout the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. As innocent Palestinian civilians, including women and children, continue to be killed and injured with impunity by the Israeli occupying forces, collective punishment measures are being simultaneously imposed against the entire Palestinian population, deepening the collective suffering and exacerbating the volatile situation on the ground.

First, I wish to draw your attention to occupied Gaza. I regret to inform you that many more Palestinian civilians, including children and women, living there continue to be victims of destructive attacks by Israel, the occupying Power. The most recent attack took place on Sunday, 21 August 2016, when occupying forces carried out more than 50 air and tank strikes across northern Gaza, injuring at least four Palestinians, including a 17-year-old youth, causing widespread panic and terror to spread among the 1.8 million civilians already living in misery under Israel's immoral, inhumane blockade, now entering its tenth year. Every aspect of Palestinian life continues to be gravely impaired in Gaza and the humanitarian and socioeconomic situations, as well as the psychological well-being of the civilians living there, are dire. The international community, including the Security Council, must take serious measures to bring an end to Israel's illegal blockade of the Gaza Strip and a halt to Israeli attacks against our civilian population living there, who continue to be killed and injured and live in a constant state of fear from Israeli air, sea and land attacks.

Turning to the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, I must draw your urgent attention once again to Israel's ongoing illegal settlement campaign.

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Despite the repeated appeals and calls of the international community, the occupying Power continues with its illegal settlement campaign, including the destruction, theft and confiscation of Palestinian lands and properties, constituting clear violations of international humanitarian law and war crimes under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Just yesterday, 22 August 2016, it was confirmed that the occupying Power has begun the process of expanding an Israeli settlement in Al-Khalil, the largest city in the occupied West Bank, in which about 1,000 illegal Jewish extremist settlers live in heavily fortified enclaves in the city, tormenting, harassing and attacking the 200,000 Palestinians who live there under the watch and protection of Israeli occupying forces.

It is without a doubt that Israel's illegal settlement campaign is undermining and fragmenting the contiguity and territorial integrity of the State of Palestine, including East Jerusalem, and physically threatening the viability and prospects for actualizing the two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders. This is being carried out in flagrant and grave breach of international humanitarian law and in complete defiance of the international community's condemnations and demands for a halt to all such provocative and illegal schemes.

Clearly, this situation warrants urgent attention by the international community, particularly the Security Council, aimed at halting all violations of international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, being perpetuated by the occupying Power with complete and utter impunity. The international community, including the Security Council, must do more than just call on Israel, the occupying Power, to heed the will of the international community and comply with its obligations under international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention. Rather it must take urgent measures that bring an end to all of the violations and crimes by the occupying Power, including its blockade of the Gaza Strip and its attacks and violations of the human rights of the Palestinian people. Regarding Gaza in particular, no longer can Israel be absolved of its legal obligations at the expense of the lives, well-being and livelihood of nearly 2 million Palestinians, who are being brutally subjected to such harsh and prolonged collective punishment. Ignoring this situation and allowing the occupying Power to continue with impunity is inhumane and immoral.

Moreover, the time is overdue for the international community to put an immediate end to Israel's colonial enterprise in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. Actions must be taken to uphold the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention and the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, as well as the 9 July 2004 Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice to bring the occupying Power into compliance with its legal obligations. In particular, while recalling the many Security Council resolutions directly addressing this crime, including resolutions 446 (1979), 452 (1979), 465 (1980) and 478 (1980), we call on the Security Council to act in unison in calling on the occupying Power to halt its settlement campaign, immediately and completely, since it is clearly acknowledged that the settlements pose the biggest challenge to a peaceful settlement. International action is urgent, for continued inaction will only ensure further Israeli impunity, with grave consequences for innocent civilians and for the prospects for peace.

The present letter is in follow-up to our 592 previous letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem,

which constitutes the territory of the State of Palestine. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 18 August 2016 (A/ES-10/728-S/2016/724) constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations being committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations